

Qualities of Swaami Shraddhaanand

Swaami Shraddhaanand

The teachings of the Satyarth Prakaash in his life

Chapter 1: Attributes of God

Swaami Shraddhaanand, formerly known as Munshiraam was once denied access to a temple. At that time an eminent personality was visiting the temple. That caused him to question his assumptions and beliefs. He realised that the concepts of God taught to him and prevailing among the public were not correct. He only understood the real concepts when he later listened to the sermons (talks on spiritual matters) of Maharishi Swaami Dayaanand Saraswati. He had ample opportunity to discuss with Swaami and cleared his doubts.

Chapter 2 & 3: Development of the self & Education

Munshiram's devoted spouse was instrumental to the change in his personality, like a mother who ceaselessly strive to mould the physical, moral / spiritual development of her child. His father convinced him to attend to the discourses of Maharishi Dayaanand Saraswati, another turning point in his life to move away from vices and be a role model, a change-maker.

He founded a Gurukula for girls and thereafter the famous Kaangri Gurukula to empower people to be change agents for a better society and a better India where people would not only grow to be bread-earners but to be real human beings, caring for the whole world ...and he admitted his own children as the first students of the Gurukula ... *leading-by-example*! He looked upon all alike, with not the slightest favour for his own children.

Indra and Harish were exemplary children who lived to regret the one-and-only time where they questioned their father, Munshiram on their admission to the Gurukula.

Chapter 4: Married life

After the turn around in his life, he did his utmost to uphold his duties as a husband and a father. Upon the demise of his wife, he did not remarry, stayed within an extended family. His brother and sister in law were of tremendous support to him, caring for his children as he was left with little time with his social commitments. Munshiram converted those moments into quality time spent with the family.

Chapter 5: Ascetics (*Vaanprastha*) & Renunciation (*Sanyaasa*)

He stayed at the Arya Samaj Mandir to complete the fund-raising for the Kangri Gurukula. He voluntarily remitted all his personal property for the advancement of the Gurukula. Those events, referred as *sarvamedha yajna*, reveal the high level of *viveka* (wisdom, discernment) and *vairaagya* (detachment).

After initiation into *sanyaasa* he took the name of Shraddhaanand, which was in line with the dedication and commitment to the causes he was advocating and fighting for as well as in whatever initiatives he embarked upon, indeed a pragmatic personality.

Chapter 6: Politics

Swaami Shraddhanand took a very active part in politics, conducting several meetings of the Congress party with outstanding leadership skills when the then current leaders failed to

rally the masses to face the oppression of the British rulers, especially after the Jalianwala Bagh firing where thousands of innocent men, women and children died. He called upon the leaders to be role models with harmony in thoughts, speech and actions as well as exemplary character, deeds and temper.

He was the first person to call for *satyagraha* and to reaffirm his commitment to strive for an independent India. He later resigned from the Congress party at the least signal that his attachment to truth, meritocracy, etc. was a hindrance to other leaders of the party. He had realised that the party was full of opportunists and resolved to sensitise the masses to be of upright conduct (*sadaachaara*). He was the first one to use the term *Dalit* and advocate for the social inclusion of the downtrodden, the vulnerable and the needy.

In fact Gandhi walked into the Gurukula as Mr. Gandhi and left as Mahaatmaa Gandhi, Swaami Shraddhanand was the first to call him Mahaatmaa for his involvement in the social field.

Chapter 7: Vedas

Over and above being a passionate truth-seeker and an ardent student of the Vedas, Swaami Shraddhanand was an efficient and effective preacher through the four-fold process of *Shravana, Manana, Nididyaasana and Saakshaatkaara* (study, contemplation, analysis of the pros & cons and realisation). He founded Gurukulas, as prescribed in the Satyaartha Prakaash to revive the study of the Vedas, thus pave the way for people to willingly adopt the Vedic values in their daily life.

Chapter 8: The Universe

He often retreated in isolation for introspection, surrendering to the Almighty (*Ishvara-pranidhaana*). Swaami Shraddhanand is reported to have often referred to the whole human race as *Ishvara putra*, i.e. sons of the one-and-only God, the **Generator** or creator, **Operator** or sustainer and the **Dissolver** of the universe.

Chapter 9: Knowledge v Ignorance

Swaami Shraddhanand stood guided by the Vedic precepts of truth, decried the social evils resulting from untruth, ignorance, blind faith, etc. Once he was sick and stated that he would like to be born again in India, as a human being, to continue the work that he was doing.

Chapter 10: Conduct

His meeting with Maharishi Dayaanand Saraswati was a catalyst for the turnaround in his life, after which he lived as a role model embodying that is desirable conduct.

Swaami Shraddhanand had an unwavering faith in the teachings of the Satyaartha Prakaash. When British police officers searched the Kangri Gurukula for bombs, he showed them the Brahmacharis as ‘bombs-in-the-manufacturing-process’ who would be the change agents to wipe out ignorance, injustice, tyranny, oppression and other evils as well as spread true knowledge, justice, good governance which would benefit the human race. He further offered a copy of the Satyaartha Prakaash to the British officers requesting them to study the masterpiece and “become very good bombs!”

He was an exceptional leader calling for people to be strong-minded on the principles of *Dharma* (virtuous living.) He was the host bearing his sacrifices (*apne yajna ke yajmaan*

khud hota thaa). His goal was only to realise the goals set out by Maharishi Dayaanand. He considered the Vedas and the Arya Samaj as a mother, moulding his personality and giving a sense of direction to his life. He even faced, bare-chest, the British soldiers requesting them to fire and that stirred-up the officers who had no alternative than to retreat in deep humiliation.

He had refused aid from the Viceroy who visited the Kangri Gurukula. He did not take risks where he might thereafter bend to the British who would later impose their systems and dilute or halt the emphasis on Vedic values

In spite of a very tight schedule he never abandoned *svaadhyaya*, the study of the scripture. He described *svaadhyaya* as a huge heritage from the Vedic seers (*rishis*) and which is a substantial part and parcel of human history (*sansaara ki badi viraasat aur mahaan itihaas ka hissaa*). That instilled in him the strong-iron mind and by his thoughts, speech and actions he caused the world to bow to him.

Tributes paid to Swaami Shraddhanand include:

...a firebrick in the furnace of Maharishi Dayanand (दयानन्द की भट्टी में ईंट, *Dayaanand ki Bhatti mein inta*)

...the crown jewel of the Gurukula system of education and the return of people misled by conversion (गुरुकुलीय व्यवस्था, शुद्धि आंदोलन का गौरव, *Gurukuleeya vyavasthaa, shuddhi aandolan ka gaurava*)

...proved his mettle by living as per the teachings of the Vedas and seers / rishis (मन वाणी और शरीर से ऋषि परम्परा को साकार किया, *mana vaani aur shareera se rishi parampara ko saakaara kiya*)

...gave new direction to society though his thoughts, words and deeds (अपने विचारों और कार्यों से समाज को नया दिशा दिया, *apne vichaaron aur karyon se samaaj ko naya deesha diyaa*)

...an ideal statesman in whose life each word, incident or action left its imprint on stone (ऐसे आदर्श महापुरुष जिसके जीवन में हर एक शब्द, घटना व काम पत्थर पे लकीर जैसा बन जाता था, *aise aadarsh mahaapurusha jiske jeevan mein har ek shabda, ghatnaa va kaama patthar pe lakeer jaisa ban jaata thaa*)

...unmoved by critics, blame, rejection, and defamation, he was focused on objectives (निन्दा बहिष्कार अपमान भी हुवा लेकिन लक्ष्य को नहीं छोड़ा, *nindaa bahishkaar apmaana bhi huvaa lekin lakshya ko nahin choda*)

There is a lot to learn from the life of this towering personality. A real tribute from us would be to dedicate quality time to study the various facets of his life and draw inspiration therefrom. In turn we shall grow into excellent bombs, *acche bombs*”, i.e. become change agents for a better society.

Acharya Bramdeo Mookoonlall

Bibliography:

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AAhwaan (The Call of Truth) | Biography of Swaami Shraddhaanand (Vichaar TV, India)

To view the films: Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJyidZTD4Qk>